



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs)

What is a Healthcare Associated Infection?

A healthcare associated infection (HAI) is an infection that a person can get while they are in a healthcare facility getting treatment for other conditions. There are different types of HAIs and they are often named after the part of the body where they occur:

- Central Line Associated Bloodstream Infection (CLABSI) - An infection that occurs when germs enter the bloodstream through a central line.
- Catheter Associated Urinary Tract Infection (CAUTI) - An infection that occurs when germs enter the urinary tract through a catheter.
- *Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI) - An infection in the intestines or bowel that is caused by *Clostridium difficile* bacteria.
- Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) - An infection in a wound or in the blood caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria.
- Surgical Site Infection (SSI) - An infection that occurs after surgery, at the site where the surgery took place.
- Ventilator Associated Pneumonia (VAP) - A lung infection that can occur in a person who is on a ventilator.

How are HAIs spread?

The germs that can cause HAIs can be spread in a number of ways. They can be carried on the hands of a healthcare provider or visitor, or they can be spread by touching dirty surfaces like door knobs and bed rails. Other HAIs are linked to the use of certain medical devices such as ventilators and catheters.

Who is at risk for HAIs?

Anyone getting treatment in a healthcare facility can be at risk for getting an HAI. The very young and the elderly, as well as any other patients who have a weakened

immune system are more at risk. Also, anyone who has been on antibiotics recently or during their hospital stay might also be at risk for getting an HAI.

How do I know if I have an HAI?

An HAI can present itself in many different ways, and often times your healthcare provider will need to perform a test in order to be sure you have an HAI. They might take a blood sample, urine sample, stool sample, or a skin swab to figure out if you have an HAI.

What are the symptoms of HAIs?

HAIs can cause a wide range of symptoms depending on where the infection occurs. You might have fever, pain, redness, or swelling if the infection is at a surgical site or near a central line. If the infection is in the intestines or bowel, you might experience diarrhea and abdominal pain.

How can HAIs be treated?

Each HAI is different, so your healthcare provider will decide the best course of treatment for your infection. The treatment may involve taking medication or the removal of the catheter, ventilator, or central line.

How are HAIs prevented?

The best way to prevent HAIs is with proper hand hygiene. Patients, visitors, and healthcare providers should always wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. In addition to proper hand hygiene, healthcare providers might use a cap, gown, gloves, and/or mask. Proper environmental cleaning is also a way to prevent HAIs. A healthcare facility's cleaning staff should pay special attention to high-touch areas in a patient's room, such as door knobs, phones, and bathrooms. Proper antibiotic use is also very important in preventing HAIs. The overuse or misuse of antibiotics can lead to germ resistance, which can put you at increased risk for HAIs. For this reason, you should use antibiotics as prescribed by your healthcare provider.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information about Healthcare Associated Infections, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hai/> or <http://www.in.gov/isdh/24769.htm>

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